"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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CASTAWAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "WRECKED IN PORT," &c. &c.

PROLOGUE.

CHAPTER I. AFTER MESS.

"JUST fetch my coat out of the commercial-room, Sam, and get my luggage ready for the bus—I am going by the eight-forty-five."

"Is this yours, Mr. Baines?" said the person addressed, the boots of the hotel, pointing to a number of queer-looking packages wrapped in leather, and secured with huge straps and buckles, which were lying in the passage of the George Inn at Cheeseborough.

"Yes," replied Mr. Baines; "you ought to know, you have seen them often enough."

"Well, do you know," said the boots, slowly, "I dare say you may think it odd, but there is a good deal of luggage of the same pattern as is brought to this house. The fancy line ain't what it was, Mr. Baines."

"You are right, Sam," said Mr. Baines, "it's overdone, it's—— Hallo! what's that?" he cried, as a roar of laughter rang through the house. "Got a public dinner going on, Sam?"

"No, not exactly," said Sam. "Yeomanry's out, and a fine out they are making of it. There is six hundred of them in one place and another up and down the town; and there has been a review to-day, and the officers has been dining here afterwards. That was them hallooing just now."

"Yeomanry, eh!" said Mr. Baines. "I don't hold much with yeomanry, Sam; my idea is that the proper way to defend this country——"

But Mr. Baines was compelled to postpone his intention of imparting his notions for the national defence, as at that moment the omnibus drove up, and seeing in it a representative of the rival house of Peto and Wiggins, Mr. Baines hastened to climb the box with the view of learning all about the intended movements of his brother commercial.

Meanwhile the stout major, whose jokes, principally levelled against himself, had evoked the laughter thus commented upon, had brought his speech to a humorous conclusion, and sat down amidst the applause of his comrades. The disinclination for more oratory, and the desire to smoke, now impelled most of the officers to push away their chairs and adjourn to the billiard-room; no one, however, ventured to move, until the president, Lieutenant-Colonel Goole, a tall, handsome man, wearing the Crimean and Indian medals, had risen from his seat, and bidding his brother officers good-night, and bowing right and left, had left the room.

Then all restraint was thrown off, everybody began talking to everybody else, caps and shakoes were hastily donned, and the doors being thrown open by the waiters, the crowd of young men surged into the passage, and thence into the billiard-room, while some, more highly favoured than the rest, sought the snuggery behind the bar, and there entertained themselves with flirting with the good-looking barmaids.

Only two men remained in the room where the dinner had been held. Both were middle-aged, but one had retained his figure, and a certain unmistakable soldier-like smartness, while the other, close verging on corpulency, unbuttoned his jacket and flung himself back in his chair, with an air of one accustomed to subordinate everything to his sense of personal comfort.

His companion watched these proceedings with a certain amount of curiosity, and when they were completed said, with a laugh:

"By Jove, Jack, this'll never do! If you go on like this you will have to pay three hundred pounds for a charger to carry you. This all comes of selling out early, and going in for domesticity and gentleman-farming."

"Upon my word I believe you are right, Cleethorpe. I must ride close upon sixteen stone now, and it seems to me that I am putting on flesh every year. I think you are wrong about the selling out though. I could not have stood that confounded "stables" much longer, and as for the domesticity, I was meant to be a home bird, and not a battered old London rake like you."

"Exactly," said Captain Cleethorpe, lighting a cigar and handing his case to his friend; "exactly; the only wonder is to me that you still remain in this regiment."

"Well, you see, Cleethorpe," said his companion, slowly expelling his smoke, "there is nothing that I know of so good that you cannot have a little too much of it, and I find that to come down here to see you, my old chum of so many years' standing, and to talk with the colonel, who is a deuced nice gentlemanly fellow and a man of the world, and to mix with these young fellows, who show me what the present generation is like, does me good by rubbing off the rust——"

He stopped as the door opened, and a young man entered the room. A man a little above the middle height, and apparently not more than eighteen years of age, with a small and singularly well-shaped head and handsome regular features. So handsome was he, with his dark blue eyes and dark chestnut hair, which curled in natural and most unusual ripples over his head, that even men, who are generally accustomed to scorn anything like personal beauty in one of their own sex, were fain to admit that he was good-looking. Artists found his lips too full, and his forehead a little too narrow, but principally admired the shape of his head, and the way in which it was joined to his throat, which they pronounced classical and Byron-like, though they complained that the delicate tints of his complexion were too essentially feminine.

There was, however, nothing effeminate in the young man's manner. He strode into the room without swagger indeed, but with perfect manly ease, and walked up to the far end of the table where he had been sitting during dinner.

"Come to hunt for my cigar-case," he said, as he passed his two brother officers; "must have dropped it under the table. Oh, here it is. Not coming to the billiard-room, Captain Cleethorpe? Do come, there is great fun going on; just going to get up a pool, Captain Norman, and must have you; capital thing for you after dinner. I'll be your player and take care you have plenty of exercise in walking after your ball." And before either of them could reply, he had laughed and quitted the room.

"That's a cheeky youth," said Captain Norman, looking after him, "cheeky, but deuced good-looking. One of the new lot, isn't it? Which; not Travers?"

"No," said Cleethorpe. "Travers is the great hulking fellow that sat within two of you just now; this lad's name is Heriot. His father is an old army man, now a major-general and a K.C.B., who has been out in India all his life, and has just retired from the service. Goole is an old chum of his, which accounts for the lad being with us, though I think I understood he is going into the regulars."

"The cub is deuced good-looking," said Captain Norman, "but he'll want a good deal of licking into shape."

"I don't think that," said Captain Cleethorpe; "he is only a boy, you see, and cheeky as most boys are, but his manners are generally pretty enough. The sort of boy I think I should be proud of," said the captain, slowly puffing at his cigar. "I wonder what Sir Geoffry will think of him? The lad hasn't seen his father, he tells me, since he was a baby."

"What was it I heard about this old Heriot?" said Captain Norman; "something, I know; a tremendous martinet, wasn't he?

"Yes," said Cleethorpe; "when I saw him out in India he was a strict disciplinarian and a first-class soldier. Kimandine Heriot they used to call him out there, from some wonderful exploit of his in either attacking or holding—I forget which—some pass during the Sikh war. But Goole, who, as I say, knows him very well, was telling me some other things about him the other day. It appears when he was last at home he married a goodish-looking woman with money and position, and that sort of thing, and everybody thought he would go on the retired list; but he didn't. After some little time he

went out to India again, leaving her behind him, and she and this boy lived together till she died, about ten years ago, and since then he has been educated in France. That's what Goole told me."

"Devilish interesting story," said Captain Norman, who was very nearly asleep, and roused himself with a start. "Now let's go and have a pool." And he pushed aside his chair, and stretched himself as he rose.

"All right," said Captain Cleethorpe, rising at the same time; and the two officers walked off together.

CHAPTER II. IN THE BILLIARD-ROOM.

"Nice atmosphere this," said Captain Cleethorpe to his companion, as he opened the door of the billiard-room, and walked into a perfect vapour-bath of tobacco smoke.

"Yes," said Captain Norman, waving his hand to and fro before him, in the vain attempt to clear some of the smoke away; "rather glad I am not going home to-night—it clings about you so confoundedly, and the smell of stale smoke is the only one thing that Mrs. Norman makes a row about. She don't mind it fresh, but hates it when it is stale."

"Ah!" said Cleethorpe, "then it won't do for you ever to bring her to see me at the Bungalow; our parson's wife tells me my place smells just like the inside of a pipe, and she ought to know, for the padre can never put his sermon together on a Saturday without his meerschaum in his mouth. It's clearing off now a bit, or we are getting accustomed to it. Let us see who are here."

The billiard-room at the George was a very large one, containing two tables—one at either end, and flanked all round the wall by stout horse-hair seats. Billiards were an institution in Cheeseborough; the town had produced one of the most celebrated professional players; and no matter what might be the season of the year, the room at the George was always well filled. The town itself was split into two political parties, hating each other with undying animosity, and keeping up their antagonism not merely at election times, or other periods of political excitement, but throughout the whole year. Each party had its head-quarters; the Liberals at the George and the Conservatives at the Royal, and all banquets, balls, fancy fairs, and public meetings of any kind in which the leaders of either party were interested, took place at one or other of their respective houses.

A Liberal elector of Cheeseborough would as soon have thought of smacking his lips over a glass of senna prepared for him by Mr. Tofts, the chemist, as of whetting his appetite with sherry and bitters at the Royal. A Conservative, if he could have imagined himself ordering such a draught, would not have been surprised to find death in the soda-and-brandy mixed for him by the barmaid at the George. But there was no billiard-room at the Royal, and as the game of billiards was a necessity both for Conservatives and Liberals, the billiard-room at the George was looked upon as a kind of neutral ground where they might meet together in friendly union, and where any reference to politics was rigidly tabooed. As happens not unfrequently, some of the keenest local politicians were the most energetic supporters of the game, and it was to their credit that they met night after night, without ever permitting themselves even a reference to the subjects, which they discussed so acrimoniously at all other times and places.

On the evening in question the billiard-room was even more full than usual; both tables were occupied, the one with a game of pool, in which most of the officers, and some of the visitors who had been present at the officers' mess, were engaged, the other by a match keenly contested by four of the best players amongst the townspeople. All along the seats ranged round the wall were men in various lounging attitudes, watching the play, and discussing the merits of the players with perfect freedom, or talking over various occurrences of that day's review, at which most of them had been present.

"Goole's not here, I suppose?" said Norman, as they seated themselves at the upper end of the room; "at least I have not come across him yet."

"No," said Cleethorpe; "he cleared off for home at once; this sort of thing won't do for him."

"Don't he like tobacco smoke?"

"Oh, it isn't that a bit—like most old Indians, he's seldom without a cheroot in his mouth—but the fact is, Goole is a very strict disciplinarian, and, having passed the greater part of his life in the command of niggers and natives, he finds it difficult to understand this kind of material," said Cleethorpe, motioning with his cigar to

some of the yeomanry who were standing at the further table.

"He's like your old friend Heriot, that you were speaking of—a bit of a martinet?"

"Well, yes," said Cleethorpe. "He doesn't seem to understand that this is a quasi-volunteer service, and that these men, who give up a certain amount of their time and money—though I allow it is to them amusement—are not to be treated as mere privates in the Line. For instance, Goole would think it quite derogatory to sit in this room while men in the regiment were so far forgetting the respect due to him as to play billiards in his august presence."

"Perhaps the major thinks so too?" said Norman; "as he has taken himself off, and you are the senior officer left to us."

"The major has taken himself off because he has discussed one bottle of sherry and two bottles of claret, and makes it a rule never to take spirits after good wine," said Cleethorpe; "and, moreover, I do not intend my dignity as senior officer to prevent my enjoying myself. What do you say; shall we join the next pool?"

"No," said Norman, lazily. "I am tired after all that bumping about this morning; besides those young fellows make such a tremendous row. Let's talk to some of these yokels."

"Well, Mr. Martin," said he, turning to a stout man in a suit of dark grey, who was sitting next him; "were you at the review to-day?"

"I were, indeed, captain, and a main fine sight it was."

"How did you think your boy Tom looked, Martin?" asked Captain Cleethorpe. "I told you the riding-master would make something of that seat of his."

"Well, sir," said farmer Martin, "may be 'tis right in the military fashion to hold your heels down and turn your toes out, as if you were at dancing-school, and to jolt about in your saddle like one sack of flour in a large waggon; but that wouldn't do for cross-country work, captain; you must shorten your stirrup-leathers there."

"Ay, ay," said Cleethorpe, nodding. "By the way, didn't you say you wanted to speak to me this evening, Martin?"

"Yes, sir," said the old man, dropping his voice, and edging up confidentially towards Captain Cleethorpe. "It's about Mr. Travers, sir; that tall gentleman with the cue in his hand now."

"I see. Don't point; he's looking at you," said Cleethorpe.

"No offence, sir," said Martin. "But this Muster Travers, Tom's in his troop, sir, and he du worry Tom's life out."

"Stop, stop, Martin, I cannot hear this," said Captain Cleethorpe, hurriedly; "I cannot listen to complaints of this kind, at all events at such a time, and in such a place. If you have anything to complain of, or rather if your son has anything to complain of against Mr. Travers, he must bring it forward in a proper manner before the colonel. Did you hear that?" continued Cleethorpe, turning to his friend. "Not a very popular youth is Mr. Travers, I suspect."

"Ill-conditioned brute," said Captain Norman; "quarrelsome, cantankerous, low-bred lout; a complete specimen of what these young fellows call in their modern slang 'bad form.'"

"He must be a singularly bad lot," said Cleethorpe, "for he even managed to-day to have a row with the major, which I should have thought an impossibility. Hallo! what's that?" He pointed as he spoke to the other end of the room, where a little knot of men were gathered together.

Above the hum arising round them, a thick voice was heard saying, in coarse, common tones, "Can't you stand still? Always jumping about in that infernal French fashion, like a dancing-master! That's the second time you have spoiled my stroke!"

"That's that brute Travers, by the voice," said Norman, raising himself up on his elbow, the better to look at the group. "Whom is he speaking to in that charming, gentlemanly manner?"

"I cannot see clearly, but to Heriot, I should fancy, by that graceful allusion to the boy's French bringing up. Yes, it is. I hear Heriot's shrill voice in reply, and the strong foreign accent which always crops up when he's excited."

"That Travers is just the sort of fellow who would bully and swagger where he thought he could do so unchecked."

"He had better not try on such practices with Heriot," said Cleethorpe. "That young man has, I fancy, a spirit of his own. At all events, if he takes after his father, he would be one of the last to stand any—— By Jove, they are at it again."

As he spoke, the little knot of men had formed again in the same place, and again Travers's voice was heard above the others, crying out, this time in louder and more passionate accents, "Keep back, sir, will you? You have spoiled my stroke again.

That time I believe you did it on purpose."

"I didn't," in Heriot's shrill accents.

"You did."

"You're a liar!"

And immediately on the utterance of the words, there followed a dull heavy sound like a thud.

Travers had hit out, and caught Heriot on the cheek. Then with something that was more of a scream than an ordinary exclamation, Heriot was rushing in upon his adversary, when the bystanders laid hold of him, and Captain Cleethorpe rushing up, pushed his way through the crowd, and taking the lad by the arm, cried out, "Mr. Heriot, what is the meaning of all this?"

The boy, who was trembling with excitement from head to foot, stared at him vacantly for a moment, then said, incoherently, "He—I——" and then, to Cleethorpe's intense dismay, burst into a flood of passionate tears.

CHAPTER III. SITTING IN JUDGMENT.

EVERY morning at six o'clock, the bell in the turret of the stables attached to Lacklands, the pretty villa in the neighbourhood of Cheeseborough, where Lieutenant-Colonel Goole resides, is rung for full five minutes, its shrill notes warning all those who hear it, and who are in the colonel's employ, that for them the new day has begun, and that they may at any time expect a visit from their master.

Mr. Boulger, who lives at Valparaiso Villa, the property adjoining Lacklands, and who made his money as a shipping agent at Birkenhead, objects very strongly to this bell, as do other residents in the neighbourhood. Colonel Goole receives their protests, which are sometimes made verbally, sometimes in writing, very politely, and in reply informs them, in a gentlemanlike manner, and well-chosen terms, that he finds it necessary to make some such public announcement to the people employed by him, and that as an old Indian officer, accustomed to early rising, he considers the time he has fixed upon as the very latest at which work ought to be commenced. He himself, he avers, is always out of bed an hour before that time; and he might have added, is generally on the spot to see that the warning of the bell is not without its proper attention.

This morning, for instance, he has been through the stables, and looked over the occupant of each of his four stalls, has talked with the gardener about the coming fruit crop, and consulted the shepherd as to the chances of fine weather; and now, just as the clock is striking seven, is striding about with a spud in his hand, devising certain alterations in the little slips of garden specially set aside for the behoof of his children.

The sunlight is even now sufficiently strong to dazzle his eyes as he looks up from the ground which he has been marking out, and he is compelled to shade them with his hand before he can make out the figure of a man, mounted on horseback, slowly approaching up the valley. Colonel Goole's eyesight had stood him in good stead on many occasions in India, and is good still. "Cleethorpe," he says to himself, after his survey; "Cleethorpe, on that leggy mare which he tried to make a charger of, but which he is quite wise in keeping for a hack. What can bring him here so early this morning? He's not a man to come out merely for the sake of a ride, or for breakfast; there must be something the matter in the regiment, I expect." And without relinquishing his hold of the spud, Colonel Goole started off down the hill to meet his brother officer.

The colonel's apprehensions were by no means set at rest by the captain's manner or appearance. Both, however, were practical men, unaccustomed to beat about the bush, or to attempt to mystify each other, and they came to the point at once.

"Good morning, Cleethorpe," said the colonel, when he was within earshot of his friend; "what brings you out here so early this morning; something has happened, I suppose?"

"You're right, sir," said Captain Cleethorpe, returning his salute, "something has happened."

"Unpleasant?"

"Very unpleasant!"

"I thought so," said the colonel, who had paused until his friend joined him, and who now turned round and walked by the horse's side; "please state shortly what it is."

"A row in the billiard-room of the George, last night."

The colonel's face darkened at these words, and he muttered, "Creditable that, by Jove! Any civilian mixed up in it?"

"No, sir; the quarrel was between Mr. Travers and Mr. Heriot."

"George Heriot?" replied the colonel, quickly; then shaking his head, "I'm sorry for that. Go on."

"Mr. Travers several times accused Mr.

Heriot of unduly pressing upon him, and spoiling his stroke in the game that was being played. At length, in the most marked and offensive manner, he accused Mr. Heriot of having pushed his arm."

"Well, Cleethorpe, well?"

"I regret to say, sir, that upon this provocation Mr. Heriot gave Mr. Travers the lie, and that then Mr. Travers struck Mr. Heriot a blow."

"A blow! struck George a blow?" said the colonel, stopping short, and looking up in horror at his friend. "By Jove, Cleethorpe, I am not a rich man, but I would have given five hundred pounds sooner than this should have happened. Who were present at this scene?"

"Many, sir; quite a crowd. Captain Norman and I, some dozen of the regiment, and several townspeople. One of the waiters and the marker were in the room, too, at the time; in fact, as you will see from the sequel, it is impossible to hush the matter up."

"Sequel! What, have you more to tell me?"

"I have, indeed, and the worst part of it."

"By Jove, Cleethorpe," said the colonel, who had fallen into deep thought, "Lord Okehampton will be furious when he hears of this; and if there's a meeting between these young men——"

"You may spare yourself the trouble of calculating the consequences of such a result, Colonel Goole; there will be no meeting."

"No meeting; that's by your management then, Cleethorpe," said the colonel, laying his hand on the captain's arm; "mutual retractations and apologies, eh? Cleverly managed, my friend."

"I don't deserve your compliment, and I regret that you have quite misapprehended the state of affairs. Mr. Travers distinctly refuses to retract anything that he has said, or to apologise for the blow given to Mr. Heriot."

"The deuce he does!" said the colonel, anxiously. "Well, then, Cleethorpe, the days of duelling are over, and rightly, too, I suppose, but—but a blow is a deuced awkward thing; George Heriot can't sit down under that; he must have him out, sir, he must have him out!"

"That course has already been suggested to Mr. Heriot," said Captain Cleethorpe; "not by me, I am too old to be mixed up in such matters, but by some gentlemen more of his own standing in the regiment; but Mr. Heriot won't fight."

"What!" cried the colonel, so loudly and suddenly as to frighten Cleethorpe's horse; "won't fight?"

"He declines to ask Mr. Travers for satisfaction for the insult passed upon him. The young man is a favourite in the regiment, and his comrades hesitated before accepting his reply. It was pointed out to him that the insult offered to him was the grossest which could be passed upon any gentleman, and one which it was impossible for him to bear, and remain in the society of gentlemen. Mr. Heriot did not attempt to argue the point, he simply declined to send a challenge."

"But didn't he give any reason for this extraordinary conduct?"

"Not the least in the world. He said he had a reason which satisfied himself, but which he could not explain."

"This is very bad, Cleethorpe."

"Very bad indeed, colonel. As I have told you, I thought it better to keep clear of the affair last night, but this morning I went to the young man's room—I knew something of his father in India, as I told you—and tried to represent to him the position in which he had placed himself. It was of no use. He still refuses to take proper notice of Mr. Travers's blow."

"He must go, Cleethorpe," said the colonel, looking up at him.

"Not a doubt of that, colonel. The prestige of the regiment would be ruined if he were suffered to remain. Two or three men expressed that opinion to me last night, amongst them Norman, who is quiet and sensible, and by no means hot-headed. Indeed, I feel it myself."

"So do I," said Colonel Goole, quietly. "You mentioned his father just now; I don't know how I shall be able to break it to Sir Geoffry, and he intended to make a soldier of the lad."

"Ah!" said Captain Cleethorpe, patting his horse's neck, "it was only last evening that I was half inclined to deplore my bachelor state, and to wish that I had a boy like his, but now I cannot be too thankful for the immense amount of anxiety and possible misery that I have been spared."

"You're right. God help poor Sir Geoffry! He will suffer frightfully. I must write to him of course, and to Lord Okehampton, and that will be a very pleasant business for me, by the way, for it was principally on my representation that Okehampton gave the boy his commission. However, we will go in and get our break-

fast now, and afterwards I will write the letters, and you shall take them in with you and despatch them. Hard lines for Heriot—frightful hard lines for a man at the close of an honourable career to find his hopes blighted and his name slurred, and that by no fault of his own. By the way, does the young man know that he must go? He had better apply for leave until the matter can be formally arranged."

"I settled that with him this morning, and am the bearer of his application. He knows, too, that he must give up all chance of entering the army."

"How does he behave about that?"

"Very quietly, and not without a certain amount of dignity. In spite of all that has happened, there is something about the young man's manner which one could never find in a coward. If one could only know his reason for this conduct!"

"That you say he distinctly refuses to give?" said the colonel.

"Most decidedly."

"Then," said the colonel, shrugging his shoulders, "we can only act on what is brought before us."

"I suppose so," said Captain Cleethorpe, repeating the shrug, and turning his horse's head in the direction of the stables, while the colonel moved towards the house.

Their talk at breakfast was about other matters, and when the meal was finished, they adjourned to the little study, and there after much cogitation and many alterations, their joint labours produced the following letter:

Cheeseborough, May 18, 1868.

My dear Heriot,—I much regret to be compelled to announce to you some ill news, which I fear will affect you very deeply. Like most old soldiers, I am not a very good hand with the pen, but you will understand that it is not for any want of sympathy that I come at once to the point, and tell you that your son must send in his resignation of the commission which he holds in the Cheddar Yeomanry. It appears that last night he and another subaltern, a Mr. Travers, came to high words in a billiard-room in this town. Your son gave Mr. Travers the lie, and Travers retorted by a blow. I need not point out to you that after this, more especially as the affair took place in public, and in the presence of several of the townspeople, there was but one course to pursue. That course, however, Mr. Heriot, although it has been plainly pointed out to him, declines to take, and is content, as it seems, to sit down patiently under the insult that he has received. Of course his continuance in the regiment under these circumstances is impossible, as henceforward all fellowship with his brother officers, or respect from the men, would be at an end.

I cannot tell you, my dear Heriot, knowing as I do your acute sense of honour, how deeply I sympathise with you under these unhappy circumstances; more especially as I am sure if George had only done what might have been expected of him, the matter could have been easily arranged. This Mr. Travers with whom he quarrelled is an underbred bully, and from what I have heard from Captain Cleethorpe, who was present at the row, and whom I think you know, I could easily have prevented matters from going to extremities. George's refusal to notice the insult has, however, completely taken the matter out of my hands. He says he has a reason for his conduct which is quite sufficient for himself, but declines to impart it to any of us. He is prepared to send in his resignation, and I have no option but to advise its acceptance. I write to Lord Okehampton accordingly by this post. Again assuring you of my deep regret,

I am, my dear Heriot, sincerely yours,

Markham Goole.

"There," said Colonel Goole, folding up the letter, "this affair will either break the old man's heart, or cause him to break his son's spirit."

"Do you think so?" said Captain Cleethorpe, doubtfully; "for my part, I look upon the first process as difficult, the last as impossible."

HANDWRITING.

Of course *hand*-writing is meant. Where a man has the exceptional capability of writing with his toes, he must be placed in a separate list. That there have been such men, appears to be sufficiently established. For instance, in the library belonging to St. Paul's Cathedral are two or three manuscript lines, purporting to be written by Roger Clarke with his foot, in 1563. In a manuscript of 1559, preserved in the British Museum, there is a written note to this effect:

Wretyn by me Xtopher Wells
wh my foot & nothyng els'.

And one Cæsar Decornet, who died at Lille in 1856, had the power of writing

well with a foot which was provided with only four toes.

One's handwriting is interesting for this among other reasons: that many persons believe in the possibility of judging the mental character of a man from his calligraphy. It was Shenstone, if we remember rightly, who said, "Show me a man's handwriting, and I will tell you his character." Cibber, in his life of Andrew Marvell, says: "The person whom he addressed was an abbot [abbé?] famous for entering into the qualities of those whom he had never seen, and prognosticating their good or bad fortune, from an inspection of their handwriting." William von Humboldt once said: "The handwriting always retains something characteristic of a man; but that of Goethe (who wrote a large flowing hand) was, I must confess, not one that could show his individuality. Schiller wrote, according to my judgment, a much more self-showing hand, peculiar to him." We can all of us say, each for himself, what kind of answer experience gives to this problem. We know harum-scarum men whose handwriting is small, neat, and careful; and slow, cautious, methodical men who write a large, bold, flowing hand. Ladies can hardly have any characteristic in this particular: seeing that the fashionable angular hand is pretty much alike in all.

Whether or not we can really determine a man's character by his handwriting, we can most certainly identify him by its means to a large degree. Not knowing a particular person, we may be able or unable to judge what sort of man he is by looking at his handwriting; but knowing both him and his writing, we have a much better chance of determining whether a certain letter or document may safely be attributed to him; or, not knowing him at all, we may judge whether two pieces of writing are by the same hand. Of course, the standard of comparison here is, good composition expressed in perfect calligraphy; the greater the departure from this standard, the more chance there is of identifying the writer, seeing that the departure may be made in an almost infinite number of ways. Good handwriting is not so much attended to now as in past days. The old writing-masters took so much pride in their work as to claim for it a rank among the fine arts. What they could do in this way may be seen in the title-pages of costly books; a writing-master, or professed penman, wrote out the whole title-page in full size, and a copper-plate engraver then reproduced it. They prided themselves also on the power of writing a great mass of words within a small compass. Peter Hales, a famous penman in the time of Queen Elizabeth, wrote within the compass of a silver penny (in Latin) the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, a prayer for the queen, his posy, his name, the day of the month, the year of our Lord, and the year of the queen's reign; he inserted it, covered with crystal, in a gold ring, which Elizabeth wore on her finger; and he also presented a magnifying glass wherewith to read the tiny writing. Of the writing-masters, down to the end of the last century, some affected the classical or severe style, some the ornate or flowing, but all alike claimed to be artists; and one is said to have died of vexation, because the Royal Academicians would not make him one of their number.

Of course the most direct departure from good penmanship is an intentional production of bad; and this taste has at certain times been in fashion. Hamlet, as we know, says:

> Some did hold it, as our statists do,
> A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much
> How to forget that learning.

The Humorist, in 1724, gave (with plenty of initial capitals) the following bit of satire: "The Badness of the Hand put me in Doubt at first, whether the Letter came from a Man of Wit or a Man of Quality." It is certain that, during a long period in the last century, good penmanship was regarded as vulgar and underbred.

Watch narrowly the habits of persons whom you know, in regard to peculiarities of calligraphy, and you will acquire much more power of identification than might at first appear attainable. The wits of the last century used to say that Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, carried her penuriousness to such a degree as to dispense with dotting her i's and crossing her t's, in order to save ink; but this smart bit of scandal comes to nothing when tested by the fact that such omissions are frequent in letter-writing, as a result of sheer carelessness. Making one sheet of paper serve for two, by crossing the writing up and down as well as from left to right, is often adopted in women's gossiping notes, though less frequently by men. It no doubt had its origin in the days when the postage of letters was charged per sheet instead of by weight, and was costly under any circumstances, especially for long distances; but

why the plan should be adopted now that postage is so low and paper so cheap, those must explain who indulge in it; at any rate, such a habit might tend to identify the writer of a particular letter. The same may be said of the use of the P.S. Jokes and skits without number have been pointed at fair letter-writers for their profuse use of postscripts; and theories have been advanced for explaining how it is that the most important part of a lady's letter often comes when the letter itself has been finished and signed with her name; but whatever fanciful explanations we may adopt, certain it is that some persons are more prone than others to this habit. Again; if one writer be more heedless than another, the fact is likely to show itself in omitted letters, or letters shaped like numerals—vices due to inattention, and not to real ignorance. Hence the well-known story of a merchant who bought up and transmitted no less than a ton of capers; having been misled by the careless way in which the word copper had been written by his correspondent. And hence the less known story, told in the Verney Papers, of a London merchant, who wrote to his agent abroad to send him 2 or 3 apes; the r was omitted, the o was made nearly as large as the numerals, and the quantity looked very much like 203; the agent wrote back to say that, in obedience to the commission, he had transmitted fourscore apes, and would send the rest by next ship. In proportion as a writer is liable to perpetrate little gaucheries of this kind, so will they form one among many means of guessing whether a particular letter is written by him. Another test is, a want of attention to syntax in composition; the spelling and the grammar may be correct, but the arrangement of the phrases and clauses into a sentence may be wrong; and the sense may either become nonsense, or be made obscure. The pronouns his, her, its, and their, are awkward tools to use, unless some circumspection be employed. A farmer, for instance, wrote to say that he and his neighbours were at a certain fair; and he added: "We had a splendid show of horned cattle. They were sorry you were not amongst them."

The experts or decipherers are constantly on the watch for these and other peculiarities; and the results are sometimes very striking. One of the most remarkable attempts ever made to pin a man down by means of his handwriting, is in connexion with that never-ending subject, Junius. Readers of ALL THE YEAR ROUND need not be alarmed. We have no intention of going over the old ground in this place. The subject only interests us so far as it concerns handwriting.

Those who are known as the Franciscans, the believers in Sir Philip Francis, always contend that the handwriting of Junius was the handwriting of Francis disguised, and tends to corroborate the evidence obtained in other ways. Not very long ago the Honourable Edward Twistleton came into possession of two letters, one a note, and the other a copy of verses, addressed to Miss Giles, at Bath; the date was either 1770 or 1771. They were not signed, and the writing was not quite alike in the two cases; but circumstances led Mr. Twistleton to a belief that they were both written by Sir Philip, at that time Mr. Francis. They were placed in the hands of Mr. Netherclift, an expert, whose knowledge of writing is admitted as authoritative in courts of justice; he made each piece of paper bear witness against the other; he stripped the masks from both, and gave his verdict that both must have been written by the same person. Then came another battle of calligraphic deciphering. The note was in the handwriting of Junius, of which specimens are still preserved with great care; the verses were, although in a disguised hand, pronounced to be written by the same person as the note; Francis, by another train of reasoning, is believed to have sent the note to Miss Giles—therefore, was or was not Francis the one person who had written Junius's Letters, and the verses, and the note? Mr. Twistleton, to put his own decision to a further test, retained the services of another expert, Mr. Chabot.

Mr. Twistleton obtained access to original letters written to Francis by Mr. Tilghman, at the time when Francis was at Bath; also numerous letters written by Francis to his brother-in-law, or to his wife between the years 1767 and 1771; also the original manuscript Letters of Junius, now possessed, some by Mr. Murray, some by the British Museum. All were placed at the disposal of Mr. Chabot, who examined them with the hundred eyes of Argus multiplied a hundredfold: the eyes of the mind and those of the body. And what a result it is! A quarto volume containing two hundred pages of reports, with numerous fac-similes taken by photo-lithography from the veritable letters themselves—all to determine whether the same hand which

wrote Francis's letters also wrote the famed Letters of Junius!

Politicians and literary men may feel interested in knowing that Mr. Chabot answers this question in the affirmative. But, for the purpose of this article, it will suffice to notice the flood of light which Mr. Chabot throws on the mode of proceeding adopted by experts in their professional labours. To prove that two documents were written by the same hand, coincidences must be shown to exist which cannot be accidental; while to prove that two documents were written by different hands, discrepancies must be pointed out which cannot be accounted for by accident or disguise. Persons who wish to hide their handwriting, to make it seem as if written by some one else, generally resort to one of three methods, or two out of three, or all three: that is, to alter the slope, the size, or the fineness of the letters. But it is more difficult for a writer to maintain a disguise in their form; indeed, our practised expert declares that he has never met with a writer who could do so, and sustain a consistent and complete disguise throughout a piece of writing of moderate length.

The connecting links between the letters of a word, consisting usually of fine strokes either near the top or near the bottom, appear to furnish a great clue to the experts. The down-strokes can be altered or disguised with comparative ease: the fine up-strokes not so easily. It is very curious to see how Mr. Chabot amalgamates Francis and Junius into one person in this matter. The word "the," of course repeated over and over again, differs considerably in the thick or down-strokes of the two writers; but a peculiar approach to horizontality in the thin strokes connecting the letters, is observable in both; and he dwells on the great difficulty of a man being a hypocrite on this particular point, except for a few words at a time. The word here just used, "time," happens to be apropos to another clue explained by Mr. Chabot. There are four varieties observable in writing, in regard to the roundness and sharpness of the tops and bottoms of letters. Some specimens are round at top and bottom, much used in law-writing; some are sharp or angular at top and bottom, in favour among ladies; some are round at top and angular at bottom; some just the reverse—all these being tendencies, irrespective of the proper shape of the letters themselves. Now Mr. Chabot counted up the number of instances in which the word "time" occurs in the several documents; in order to show that both writers adopted the peculiarity of making the letter "i" in "time" round at the top and angular at the bottom, the reverse of the plan followed by most persons.

The habit of using a magnified small letter for an initial, instead of a proper capital A, M, or N, is another thing which the experts appear to have narrowly scrutinised. Some writers use this substitution largely; they could not readily get out of the habit; and an inadvertency on this point might defeat an attempt to disguise one's customary handwriting.

Besides the shape, size, fineness, slope, roundness, angularity, and connecting links of the letters in a word, and the mode of initialising first words and proper names, there is an almost infinite number of points of difference between the handwriting of different persons. Some differ from others in emphasising their words by numerous capitals, a style which the imitators of Carlyle know something about; a much larger number underline the words to which they wish to draw attention; some make abundant use of single quotation marks, ' ', others of double, " ", although no actual quotation is given; some rely greatly on dashes (—), others on notes of admiration (!), others on parentheses ( ); a few precise people try to observe the proper gradation of , ; : . in a sentence; some content themselves with commas and full-stops alone; while others seem to think that punctuation is a meaningless formality. Other habits which persons more or less acquire, tending to associate them with a particular kind of handwriting, relate to the mode of arranging sentences into paragraphs; the mode of correcting mistakes or supplying omitted words; the tendency to spell certain words in an erroneous way, the abbreviation of words wherever possible, such as don't, won't, couldn't, tho', &c.; a tendency to make short work with all such terminal syllables as ing, ment, ation, ful; a habit of making all the down-strokes of the i, n, u, and m, as nearly alike as possible, reducing such a word as minimum to fifteen similar down-strokes, &c. In writing letters, whether of business or friendship, men differ in these among other points: putting the date and place at the bottom instead of the top of the letter; omitting the address of the writer whenever possible; placing the day before the month in the date;

writing the names of all the months at full length, and a multitude of others.

One's handwriting is, in fact, a part of one's self to a greater degree than most of us suppose.

A WRESTLE WITH NIAGARA.

I WAS standing about thirty or forty yards in advance of the Clifton, that is, thirty or forty yards nearer to the Horseshoe along the brink of the rocks, and opposite the American fall. The ground must have been about the same height as the opposite fall, but, owing to the immense hill down which the rapids rush, it was possible to distinguish any object of the size of a boat a considerable distance above the fall, so that, now it was pointed out to me, I saw, in the middle of the rapid, a huge log of wood, the trunk of a tree, which had lodged there some years before, and upon it a black speck. This, after some observation, I perceived to move. It was a man. Yes; he and his two companions had, on the previous night, been rowing about some distance above the fall. By some means or other they had ventured too near the rapids, had lost all command of their boat, and had been hurried away to destruction. It was supposed that about half a mile above the fall the boat had upset, and, with two wretched men still clinging to it, went over the fall at about nine or ten o'clock at night, while the third man was driven against this log of wood, climbed upon it, and sat astride of it through the darkness of the night, amid the roar, the turmoil, and the dashing spray of the rapids.

I crossed the river, ascended the rock by the railway, and hurried to the spot, where I found him so near that I could almost distinguish his countenance. He was then lying along the log, grasping it with both arms, and appeared exhausted to the last degree. He was evidently as wet from the spray, as though he had been standing under water. By this time people were assembling, and different plans for his rescue were proposed and discussed on all sides; already, indeed, one effort had been made. A small boat had been firmly lashed to a strong cable, and dropped down to him from the bridge, which crossed the rapid between the mainland and Goat Island, about sixty yards above the log.

This boat had proceeded a few yards in safety, was upset, spun round like a piece of cork at the end of a thread by the force of the water, which finally snapped the cable in two, and the boat disappeared over the fall.

But now a despatch had been sent to Buffalo (a distance of little more than twenty miles) by electric telegraph, desiring that a life-boat should be sent by the first train, nine-thirty A.M., and this in time arrived, borne on the shoulders of about twenty men, and a splendid boat she was, large, built entirely of sheet iron, with air-tight chambers; a boat that could not sink. She was girt round with strong ropes, and two new two-inch cables brought with her. All this arrangement naturally took up much time, and the poor wretch's impatience seemed extreme, so that it was thought advisable to let him know what was going on. This was done by means of a sheet, upon which was written in large letters in Dutch (his native language), "The life-boat is coming." He stood up, looked intently for a minute, and then nodded his head. When the boat was at last launched, the excitement was intense. Two cables, each held by many men, were let down from either end of the bridge, so that they might have some command in directing the course of the boat down the river. She seemed literally to dance upon the surface of the water like a cork.

The rapid consists of a number of small falls distributed unevenly over all parts of the river, so that there are thousands of cross currents, eddies, and whirlpools, which it would be utterly impossible to avoid, and in which lies the danger of transit for any boat between the bridge and the log. The life-boat's course was steady at first: she arrived at the first fall, she tripped up and swung round with a rush, but continued her course safely, only half filled with water. Again she descended with safety, but at length approaching the log she became unmanageable, swinging either way with immense force, spinning completely over, and finally dashing against the log with such violence that I fully expected the whole thing, man and all, to have been dislodged and hurried down the rapid. But, no, it stood firm—the boat had reached its destination. Yet, alas! how useless was its position. It lay completely on its side above the log, and with its hollow inside directed towards the bridge, played upon by the whole force of the current, which fixed its keel firmly against the log. It seemed immovable. The man himself climbed towards it, and in vain tried to pull, lift, or

shake the boat; nor was it moved until both cables being brought to one side of the river by the united force of fifty or sixty men, she was dislodged, and swung down the rapid upside-down, finally pitching headlong beneath an eddy, entangling one of her cables on the rocks, and there lying beneath a heavy fall of water, until in the course of the day, one cable being broken by the efforts of the men to dislodge her, and the other by the sheer force of the current, she went over the falls—the second sacrifice to the poor fellow, who still clung to the log, swayed between hope and fear. The loss of this boat seemed a great blow to him, and he appeared, as far as we could judge at a distance, at times to give way to the utmost despair. A third boat was now brought—wooden, very long, and flat-bottomed. Its passage was most fortunate, and as she floated down, even alongside of the log without accident, hope beamed in every countenance, and we all felt the man might be saved. Hope also had revived in him. He stood for some time upon the log making signals to those who directed the boat.

He now eagerly seized her, drew her towards him, jumped into her, and made signs to them to draw him up. This was commenced, but some of the tackle had caught, and it was deemed necessary to let it loose for an instant. This was done; the boat floated a few feet down the rapid, swung round the lower end of the log, entangling the cable beneath it, and there remained immovably fixed. Once more the poor fellow's work began. He drew off one of his boots and baled the boat, he pushed at the log, climbed upon it, and used every possible exertion to move the boat, but in vain! An hour was spent in these fruitless efforts—an hour of terrible suspense to all who beheld him. He worked well, for he worked for his life. Three months after, this boat retained its position, nor will it move until the rocks grind its cable in two, or the waters tear it piecemeal into shreds.

Another plan must be devised, and this, with American promptitude, was soon done. A raft of from twenty to thirty feet long and five feet broad was knocked together with amazing rapidity. It consisted of two stout poles, made fast, five feet asunder, by nailing four or five pieces of two-inch board at each extremity; thus the machine consisted of a sort of skeleton raft, with a small stage at either end. On one of these stages—that to which the cables (of which there were two) were lashed—was tightly fixed a large empty cask, for the sake of its buoyancy, on the other a complete network of cords, to which the man was to lash himself; also a tin can of refreshments, he having taken nothing since the evening before; three or four similar cans, by the way, had been let down to him already, attached to strong pieces of new line, but the cords had in every instance been snapped, and the food lost.

The raft was finished, launched, and safely let down to the log. The poor fellow committed himself to its care, he lashed his legs firmly, and then signalled to draw him up; thus for the second time the ropes had begun to be drawn up, the raft advanced under the first pull, but its head, owing to the great light cask, dipped beneath it, and as the raft still advanced, the water broke over it to such a depth that the man was obliged to raise himself upon all fours, keeping his chin well elevated to avoid being drowned. We expected at every pull to see his head go under, but, alas! they pulled in vain, for the front of the raft, pressed down by the weight of falling water, had come in contact with a rock, and would not advance. The ropes were slackened, she fell back, but again hitched in her return. It was then determined to let her swing to another part of the rapid, where the stream did not appear quite so impassable. This was done, and a second attempt to draw it up was made, half-way between the log and the opposite shore (a small island). This also failed from the same cause, therefore it was proposed to endeavour to let the raft float down and swing round upon the island. This was commenced, but with the old result, the cable was caught in the rocks, and the raft remained stationary. However, she was floating easily, and the poor fellow could rest.

Early in the day, for the afternoon was now far advanced, one of the large ferry-boats (built expressly for crossing beneath the falls) had been brought up, but had lain idle. This was now put into requisition, and nobly she rode down towards the raft, whilst in breathless silence we all watched her as she dipped at the various falls, and each time recovered herself. I shuddered as she was launched, for I began to see that the man could not be saved by a boat; a boat never could return against a rapid, however well able to float down it. No sooner would her bow come into contact with a fall than it would dip, fill, and spin round, as did the first skiff which was lost.

The poor fellow himself was getting impatient—visibly so. He untied his lash-

ings, stood upright upon the raft, eagerly waiting to seize the boat, and jump into her. She had but one more fall to pass, and that fall was situated just above where he stood; she paused at the brink of it, swung down it like lightning, and, as he leaned forward to seize her, she rose on the returning wave, struck him in the chest, and he struggled hopelessly in the overwhelming torrent.

The exclamation of horror, for it was not a cry, which burst from the thousands who by this time were assembled, I shall never forget, nor the breathless silence with which we watched him, fighting with the waters as they hurried him along upright, waving both arms above his head. We lost sight of him at intervals, yet again and again he reappeared, and I thought hours must have passed in lieu of one brief half-minute. But the end came at last; once more I saw his arms wildly waved above his head, and, in an instant, the crowd turned from the spot in dead silence. The man was lost.

KING ALFRED'S WILL.

["I give to my wife Ealswithe, three manors: Wantage, because I was born there; Lamborne, because I dwelt there; and Wickham, because I fought there."]

Thus, very near a thousand years ago
Willed Alfred, unto whom we English owe
Noble achievement and a high example.
Defeat could never lay his courage low;
Patient he was until he smote the foe,
And his reward was ample.

Great King was Alfred, though his folk were few;
To heroic thought and deed is greatness due;
And the Truth-teller was an absolute hero.
No despot he, with acts of sanguine hue,
Surrounded by a fulsome, flattering crew,
No sensual scoundrel-Nero.

His will's a poem. See, he leaves his wife
The Berkshire manor where he entered life,
Under the chalk downs, ancient lazy Wantage.
He leaves her Lamborne, where his memory's rife,
And Wickham, where with the Dane in deadly strife,
He won no mean advantage.

Ten centuries have passed; but Alfred still,
The man of perfect truth and steadfast will,
Among us it is easy to discover:
Who fights his foes with tranquil, patient skill,
Knowing that justice must its weird fulfil,
Who is a loyal lover.

CHRONICLES OF LONDON STREETS.

SERLE'S PLACE, TEMPLE BAR.

Turn sharp round to the right northward, by the little cave of the hermit barber who has skilfully fortified himself for several generations (indeed ever since Steele's time) in a crevice of Temple Bar, and you find yourself in that dingy defile, once known to wits, poets, and geniuses of all kinds as Shire-lane, and latterly (since July, 1845), as Serle's-place. When we say you *will* find yourself, we stand corrected; we mean rather, you would, once upon a time, have found yourself, for one step beyond the barber now is chaos. Serle's-place, where Steele once lived, and where the great Kit-Cat Club disported, in those palmy days when poets were ministers of state, has gone to return no more; it has melted into that air — that not very thin air — that now floats over the yawning space devoted to the Law Courts of the future. It is now, in a word, part of the great vacuum that London abhors, which is bounded westward by Clement's-inn, northward by King's College Hospital, and eastward by Bell-yard. So old London is vanishing while we write.

The whole reign of Queen Anne used to rise before our eyes when we ventured into that very shy lane, at whose Fleet-street entrance, in the Kit-Cat times, Whig dukes and earls by the half-dozen, not to mention Whig lyrical poets, satirists, and epigrammatists of the highest rank in Parnassus, have descended from their coroneted coaches and their swaying sedan-chairs, venturing boldly into the defile, and laughing till the old gable ends echoed again. Oh, for one gleam of the flambeaux of Halifax or of Dorset on the statues of Temple Bar! Oh, for one moment's eaves-dropping at the lattice of the Trumpet, to hear Dorset repeat his gay farewell song, To all you Ladies now on Land, or Halifax enunciate one of his wise axioms, true as Rochefoucauld's, yet far more kindly!

The origin of this King of Clubs no one seems clearly to establish. Ned Ward talks of the City Mouse and Country Mouse—written by Prior and Charles Montague (afterwards Earl of Halifax), to banter Dryden's Hind and Panther, and published in 1687—as having "stole into the world out of the witty society of the Kit-Cat." But then who was Ward? The keeper of a punch-house in Fulwood's-rents, Gray's-inn, a reckless party writer, careless about facts, and indifferent to truth; a writer of no more value than the author of Tom and Jerry, who indeed painted with staring colours the London of the Regency, just as Ward did the London of the last years of William of Orange. His London Spy was written in 1699, and his testimony about a disputed matter in political literature twelve years before, is next to worthless. We therefore settle down to the old decision (disagreeing with Mr. Charles Knight) that the grand club arose, as nearly as possible, about the year 1699,

and flourished till about 1720. It was held at the Trumpet in Shire-lane; not in Gray's-inn-lane, as Ned Ward says, or in King-street, Westminster, as a later heretic is inclined to have it. It originated, in all probability, in a weekly dinner given by Jacob Tonson, the great bookseller, who published Dryden's Virgil, purchased a share of Milton's works, and first made Shakespeare accessible to the multitude. This great bookseller, "the left-legged" Jacob of the Dunciad, had a shop at Gray's-inn-gate, in Gray's-inn-lane, from 1697 to 1712, and then removed to opposite Catherine-street in the Strand. Now Ned Ward, who asserts that the first Kit-Cat meetings were at a pudding-pie shop in Gray's-inn-lane, and were then removed to the Fountain Tavern in the Strand, may surely be wrong also in the date of the club's starting. Malone, however, seems inclined to believe the Kit-Cat Club to be synonymous with "the Knights of the Most Noble Order of the Toast," to whom, in 1699, Elkanah Settle, one of Dryden's butts, and the lord mayor's laureate, addressed some complimentary verses. It seems doubtful whether it was the Trumpet (where Steele's club of country twaddlers afterwards met) which was kept by Christopher Katt, the mutton-pie man, at the sign of the Cat and Fiddle. Mr. Diprose, the latest writer on the antiquities of St. Clement's parish, decides that it was, and we like to think it was. The club derived its name, according to the Spectator (No. 9), not from Kit Katt, the pastrycook, who kept the house where the club dined, but from the pies, which derived their well-known London name from the maker. Pope treats the derivation as doubtful in the following neat and witty epigram upon the club:

> Whence deathless Kit Katt took his name
> Few critics can unriddle.
> Some say from pastrycook it came,
> And some from Cat and Fiddle;
> From no trim beaus its name it boasts,
> Grey statesmen or green wits,
> But from that pell-mell pack of toasts
> Of old Cats and young Kits.

The fact is simply this, that the name of the alliterative sign, representing the name of the owner, amused the town, and was chosen to designate the pies, and from the pies the club was christened. It seems very doubtful whether Dryden was ever more than a visitor at the club, as he died in May, 1700, and the club cannot be clearly traced back beyond 1699. Dryden's portrait, by Kneller, was certainly among those likenesses of the members painted for Tonson's cottage at Barn Elms, and now preserved by Mr. R. W. Baker, a representative of the Tonson family, at Bayfordbury in Hertfordshire. To judge by the engravings of them by Faber (1735), the year before Tonson died, the club had consisted of forty-eight poets, wits, noblemen, and gentlemen. The proud Duke of Somerset, who was said never to allow his children to sit in his presence, and who gave his orders to his servants by signs, came early. Then followed the Dukes of Richmond, Grafton, and Devonshire, the great Duke of Marlborough, the Duke of Kingston, and, after the accession of George the First, that strange blundering prime minister, the Duke of Newcastle. Of earls there was Dorset, the patron of Prior and Dryden, whom the latter poet absurdly ranked with Shakespeare as the first of English satirical poets, and dubbed "the restorer of poetry, the greatest genius, the truest judge, and the best patron," and whom Rochester described as

> The best natured man with the worst natured muse.

Sunderland, Wharton, that half madman, and the Earl of Manchester, were also members. Among the lords it counted Halifax the wise, and Somers, the good lord chancellor. Bluff, brusque Sir Robert Walpole was of them, and so at various times were Vanbrugh, the wit, dramatist, and architect; Congreve, the most courtly of gentlemen; Halifax's protégé, Granville, "the polite," as Pope calls him, a poet and secretary-of-war to Queen Anne; Addison, the greatest of our English essayists; Steele, that kindly humorist; Garth, the worthy poet and physician; Maynwaring, a poor writer but great conversationalist of the day; Stepney, a second-rate versifier and diplomatist, Arthur Attlie, of whom we know nothing; and Walsh, another small bard and a friend of Dryden, and patron and early adviser of Pope. Prior could hardly have belonged to the club after his perversion.

Of the poets in the Kit-Cat Club, Pope used to say that Garth, Vanbrugh, and Congreve, were "the three most honest-hearted real good men." The club in summer dined either at Tonson's villa, at Barn Elms, previously the residence of Cowley, or at the Upper Flask Tavern on Hampstead Heath. It was the smallness of Tonson's rooms at Barn Elms that led to Kneller's inventing that reduced half-length size for portraits still called by artists Kit-Cat. The club-room was standing in 1817, but was soon after joined to a barn and

turned into a riding-school. Sir Richard Blackmore, the poetical physician whom Pope and Dryden ridiculed, and who wrote to the rumbling of his carriage-wheels, describes the Kit-Cats on their way to Hampstead:

> Or when Apollo-like thou'rt pleased to lead
> Thy sons to feast on Hampstead's airy head,
> Hampstead that towering in superior sky,
> Now with Parnassus doth in honour vie.

The club gradually grew more and more political; the members became louder over their claret for Protestant ascendancy and the glorious House of Hanover. Gradually the wits fell out, and mere rank rose to the top. Pope says the club broke up soon after Lord Mohun, a dissolute rake and duellist of bad reputation, and Lord Berkeley, joined it, to the horror of sober old Jacob Tonson, the club secretary, who saw "they were just going to be ruined." Mohun, perhaps drunk, wantonly broke the gilded emblem off his chair; and Jacob told his friends with a sigh that "the man who would do that would cut a man's throat." In 1725 (George the First), the club had gone. Vanbrugh, in 1727 (George the Second), writing the year before his death to Tonson, says, in his gay pleasant way, "You may believe me when I tell you, you were often talked of, both during the journey and at home, and our former Kit-Cat days were remembered with pleasure; we were one night reckoning who were left, and both Lord Carlisle and Cobham expressed a great desire of having one meeting next winter if you can come to town—not as a club—but as old friends that *have* been of a club, and the best club that ever met." There is a pleasing tone of regret about this, as if Vanbrugh himself felt the sand run low in the glass, and there is a touch of pathos in the idea of the three fashionable club men in the country, sitting down at night, and counting who were left of the friendly tontine.

It was the gallant custom of this club once a year to elect by ballot a reigning beauty as a toast. To this queen of their choice the poetical members wrote by turns verses, which were etched with a diamond upon the glasses. The most celebrated of these toasts were the four beautiful daughters of the Duke of Marlborough, Lady Godolphin, Lady Sunderland, generally called the "Little Whig," the pride of that party, Lady Bridgewater, and Lady Monthermer; Swift's friends, Mrs. Long and Mrs. Barton, the niece of Sir Isaac Newton; the Duchess of Bolton, Lady Carlisle, Lady Wharton, and Mrs. Di. Kirk. A few of these epigrammatic verses have been preserved, but they are, to tell the sober truth, for the most part flat as yesterday's champagne. Those written on the "Little Whig" and Lady Mary Churchill, by Lord Halifax, in 1703, are the most tolerable:

THE LADY SUNDERLAND.

> All nature's charms in Sunderland appear,
> Bright as her eyes, and as her reason clear;
> Yet still their force, to man not safely known,
> Seems undiscovered to herself alone.

The one on The Lady Mary Churchill is weaker, and even whiggier:

> Fairest and latest of the beauteous race,
> Blest with your parent's wit, and her first blooming face,
> Born with our liberties in William's reign,
> Your eyes alone that liberty restrain.

The words "Little Whig" were foolishly inscribed on the first stone of the new Haymarket Theatre, built by subscription in 1706, and placed under the management of Vanbrugh and Congreve.

But the prettiest story of the Kit-Cat toasts is that related by clever, eccentric Lady Mary Wortley Montague, of her own adventure as a child. On the night of the annual election, when lords and wits were proposing this or that beauty, and "dark eyes," "blue eyes," "swan neck," "bosom of Juno," "bust of Dian," and such phrases from the poets were flying about the best room at the Trumpet—as the flasks of Florence and Burgundy were being loudly uncorked, and the guests drew closer for the business of the evening—a whim suddenly seized Evelyn Pierpoint, Duke of Kingston, to nominate his little girl, then not eight years of age, declaring that she was far prettier than any lady on the day's list. The other members demurred, because the rules of the club forbade the election of any beauty whom the members of the club had not seen. "Then you shall see her," cried the duke, and instantly sent a message home to have the little lady dressed in her best, and brought to him at the tavern. She presently appeared from her sedan, shy at first, and wondering. She was received with acclamations, and her claim unanimously allowed, her health was drunk up-standing by all the Whig gentlemen, and her name duly engraved with a diamond upon a drinking glass. She was then passed round, like a bouquet, from the lap of one poet, patriot, or statesman, to the arms of others; was feasted with sweetmeats, overwhelmed with caresses, and, what perhaps already pleased her better than either, heard her wit and beauty loudly extolled on every side. Pleasure, she said, was too poor a word

to express her sensations; they amounted to ecstasy; never again, throughout her whole future life, did she pass so happy a day. She thought of that innocent time, perhaps, when Pope lashed her with scorpions; and again in her miserable old age, in Florence, when malice and scandal had mangled her reputation, and rioted on her good name.

It is difficult to realise in Jacob Tonson, the friend of Congreve and of Halifax, of Addison and Steele, that hard, grinding bookseller, who complained bitterly to Dryden that he had only got fourteen hundred and forty-six lines translated from Ovid for fifty guineas, instead of, as he had expected, fifteen hundred and eighteen lines for forty guineas, and who eventually paid him in bad silver. In the faithful secretary, who treasured his forty-eight portraits of club friends at Barn Elms, we lose sight of the little pudgy dealer in books at the Judge's Head at the south-west corner of Chancery-lane, whom Dryden is said to have etched in aqua-fortis and catalogued with "two left legs, leering looks, bull face, and Judas-coloured hair," a rough caricature not forgotten, be sure, by Tonson's Tory enemies of later years. We rather recognise him as Rowe, that solemn writer but merry liver, sketched him in 1714, in an imaginary dialogue between Tonson and Congreve, the author who wished Voltaire to look upon him simply as the fine gentleman. According to Rowe, the indestructible English passion of tuft-hunting spoiled Jacob, for he says:

> While in your early days of reputation
> You for blue garters had not such a passion,
> While yet you did not live, as now your trade is,
> To drink with noble lords and toast their ladies,
> Thou, Jacob Tonson, were, to my conceiving,
> The cheerfullest, best, honest fellow living.

To judge by a letter of Stepney to Tonson, "three o'clock in the morning" was no unusual Kit-Cat time, so that Addison must have had time to melt into geniality there, and Steele must have had Burgundy enough to send him home with eloquence sufficient to excuse himself to Prue, his somewhat vixenish wife. Nor was the Tory lampooner altogether wrong when he made Tonson say:

> I am the founder of your loved Kit-Cat,
> A club that gave direction to the state,
> 'Twas there we first instructed all our youth,
> To talk profane, and laugh at sacred truth;
> We taught them how to boast, and rhyme, and bite,
> To sleep away the day, and drink away the night.

Many as were the wise things spoken in Shire-lane, countless as were the jokes that were cracked, there are not many anecdotes extant of the Kit-Cat nights. The lights are extinguished, the glory passed away like the morning cloud, or a dream when one awakens. One story, however, survives, that is highly characteristic of Steele's amiable weaknesses. One grand night, the great Whig festival of the celebration of King William's anniversary, Doctor Hoadley, the worthy Bishop of Bangor, father of Hogarth's great friend, went with those friendly comrades, Steele and Addison, to solemnly drink "the immortal memory." Steele, in his anxiety to preserve William's memory lost his own, and the invisible spirit of wine beguiled him into folly. Presently John Sly, an eccentric hatter of the day, and a most zealous politician, especially when drunk, crawled into the room on his knees, in the old cavalier fashion, to drink a tankard of ale to the immortal memory of the Dutch hero. No one laughed, so Steele, tender even in his liquor, kept whispering to the rather staggered bishop, "Do laugh, it is humanity to laugh." By-and-bye, the bishop prudently withdrawing, Steele, altogether overcome by sympathy with the immortal memory, was discovered among the dead men, packed into a chair, and sent home. Late as it was, nothing would satisfy the wilful man, but being carried to the Bishop of Bangor, no doubt to apologise. At last, by quiet and steady resistance, the chairmen got Steele home, and, with considerable coaxing and difficulty, up into his bedroom; but there a qualm of kindness and courtesy came over him, and he would insist on seeing them down-stairs. Having done this, with the most tipsy complacency, he returned quietly to bed. Next morning, penitent Steele sent the tolerant bishop the following admirable couplet:

> Virtue with so much ease on Bangor sits,
> All faults he pardons, though he none commits.

One night, when the good-natured Garth lingered at his club wine, Steele reproved him. Garth had before then, on his first arrival, been talking of the patients who were waiting for him. "Well," said Garth, pulling out his list of fifteen, "it's no great matter, Dick, after all, whether I see them to-night or not, for nine of them have such bad constitutions not all the physicians in the world can save them, and the other six have such good constitutions that all the physicians in the world could not kill them."

In 1817, that clever bookseller, Sir Richard Phillips, made a pilgrimage to Tonson's old villa at Barn Elms, to see the room where the great club had met. The people had never heard of the Kit-Cat, but

showed him a club-room in a detached building in the garden. It was eighteen feet high, and forty feet long by twenty feet wide. The mouldings and ornaments had been grand. The faded red hangings still remained on the walls, and on the faded squares where Kneller's portraits had been hung the numbers and names still remained, written in chalk, for the guidance of the hanger.

The Trumpet (afterwards the Duke of York), No. 86, Middle Serle's-place, was, if not the stronghold of the Kit-Cat, at least a tavern sacred to the memory of Steele, for there, in No. 86 of the Tatler, he makes old Isaac Bickerstaff (the character he himself assumed), on Thursday, October 27, 1709, receive that distinguished deputation of Staffordshire country gentlemen, and delightful, pompous old fogies, Sir Harry Quickset, Baronet, Sir Giles Wheelbarrow, Thomas Rentfree, Esquire, justice of the quorum, Andrew Windmill, Esquire, and Mr. Nicholas Doubt, of the Inner Temple, Sir Harry's grandson, wait upon him at the unconscionable hour of nine in the morning. Nine arrives, the chairs are set. The tea equipage is fixed. A knock comes at the front door. Steele opens it; there is a long silence, and no one enters. At last he hears the punctilious old fellows saying: "Sir, I beg your pardon. I think I know better." "Nay, good Sir Giles." Steele looks out slyly, and sees the worthy people, every one with his hat off and arms spread, offering the door to each other. After many offers they enter with much solemnity. "I met my old friend Sir Harry," Steele says, "with all the respect due to so reverend a vegetable. I got him with great success into his chair by the fire, without throwing down any of my cups. The knight bachelor told me he had a great respect for my whole family, and would, with my leave, place himself next to Sir Harry, at whose right he had sat every quarter sessions these thirty years, unless he was sick." Steele offends the justice by asking him to sit down after the simple squire, but this error he promptly corrects, and requests the gentlemen who have done him this great honour to drink a dish of tea. They all declare they never drink tea of a morning, and the young Templar winks at Steele, and puts out his tongue at his grandfather, as much as to say, "Tea, indeed."

The steward, "in his boots and whip," after an ominous silence, then proposes that they shall at once all adjourn to some public-house, where every one can call for what he pleases, and enter upon business. There is then a good deal of stiff ceremony, and filing and countermarching, the justice taking good care to duly cut in before the squire. On the first landing, a maid, coming up with coals, disturbs the procession, which gets locked by aid of the mischievous young Templar, and but for a noise in the street, which Steele wickedly suggests is a fire, upon which they run down anyhow, the checkmate would have been interminable. But, says the delightful chronicler, "we drew up in very good order, and filed off down Shire-lane, the impertinent Templar driving us before him as in a string, and pointing us out to his acquaintances who passed by." Slipping between the justice and the squire, Steele hears the latter whisper to the steward, "that he thought it hard that a common conjuror should take place by him, though an older squire." At Temple Bar, Sir Harry and Sir Giles get safely over, but a row of coaches cuts off the rest. At last they all land, and draw up in very good order before Tooke's (a bookseller), "who favoured our rallying with great humanity." From there, with equally serious ceremonies of precedence, they proceed to Dick's Coffee-house, where, repeating their civilities, they mount to the high table, "which has an ascent to it, enclosed in the middle of the room," the whole house being much moved by the entry of persons of so much state and rusticity. Sir Harry at once calls for a mug of ale and Dyer's Letter, and, on being told the letter is not taken in there, cries, "No? then take back your mug. We are like, indeed, to have good liquor at this house." Here the Templar gives Steele a second wink, and would be confiding did not Steele look very grave. The gentlemen not seeming inclined to begin business before a morning draught, Steele calls for a bottle of Mum, soon for a second, then for a third, and at last Sir Harry tells him, in a low voice, that the place is too public for business, and he would call upon him on the morrow morning and bring some more friends with him.

In No. 132 of the Tatler, the same delightful humorist sketches a club of fogies at the Trumpet, with whom he says he is in the habit of spending two or three hours every evening to unbend his mind after study, and to prepare himself for sleep. This club of heavy, honest men originally consisted of fifteen members, but "the severity of the law in arbitrary times," as

Steele slyly says, and the natural effects of old age, had reduced the society to five persons. Sir Geoffery Notch, the patriarch of the club, had sat in the right-hand chair time out of mind, and was the only man of the set allowed to stir the fire. He was of an ancient family, and had run through a great estate with hounds, horses, and cock-fighting. He looked upon himself as a worthy, honest gentleman, who had had misfortunes, and he regarded every thriving person as a pitiful upstart. Major Matchlock, the next senior, had served in the civil wars, and knew all the battles by heart. He thought nothing of any action since Marston Moor, and was much esteemed in the club for his nightly story of how he was knocked off his horse at the rising of the London apprentices. Honest old Dick Reptile (an ill-chosen name) was the third. Dick was a good-natured, robust man, who spoke little, but laughed at other men's jokes. He always brought his nephew, a youth of eighteen, with him, to show him good company, and give him a taste of the world. This youth was usually silent, but whenever he did open his mouth or laugh, his uncle constantly made the same jocular remark: "Ay, ay, Jack; you young men think us fools, but we old men know you are." The wit of the club was a bencher from the Temple, who in his youth had frequented the fashionable ordinaries round Charing-cross, and pretended to have known Jack Ogle. He knew by heart about ten distiches from Hudibras, and he never left the club till he had applied them. If any modern wit was mentioned, or any town frolic spoken of, he would shake his head at the dulness of the present age, and tell a story of Jack Ogle. This Trumpet Club met precisely at six o'clock in the evening, and at three-quarters past six the major usually began his story of the battle of Naseby. On Steele's arrival, Sir Geoffery, to show his goodwill, offered him a pipe of his own tobacco, and stirred up the fire. In common gratitude, Steele drew him on to the story of old Gantlet, a favourite game-cock, on whose head the knight in his youth had won five hundred pounds, and lost two thousand. Gantlet's generations, diet, battles, and manner of life, roused the major to spur to Edge Hill fight, and a duel of Jack Ogle's naturally followed. Old Reptile was extremely attentive to all that was said, though he had heard the same every night for twenty years, and upon all occasions winked to his nephew to mind what passed. This innocent conversation was spun out till about ten, when the maid came with a lantern to light home old Bickerstaff. So, with a humour half like Goldsmith, half like Cervantes, Steele sketches an old haunt in the dingy London lane that has just melted into air.

Shire-lane, mean and obscure in its youth, splendid in its middle life, grew infamous in its old age. It had been christened "Rogue's-lane" in the reign of James the First; latterly it became vile and squalid, and swarmed with thieves and their female companions. Nos. 1, 2, and 3, Lower Serle's-place, were infamous dens, that once possessed a secret communication, as the latest chronicles of the lane record, with No. 242, Strand, through which thieves could escape when they had beaten and stripped the fools they had decoyed. Nos. 9, 10, and 11, were beggars' houses, and known as Cadgers' Hall; not long since, several bushels of eleemosynary bread, thrown scornfully aside by professional beggars, were found there by the police. No. 19, a double house, was known as the Retreat, because thieves could run through it and dodge down Crown-court into the Strand. No. 13, a printing office, had formerly, says Mr. Diprose, been the Bible public-house, a house of call for printers twenty years ago. Jack Sheppard used to frequent this, and there was a trap in the middle of one room by which the agile young carpenter used, it was said, to drop through into a subterraneous passage and so escape into Bell-yard, and from thence into his old Clare Market haunts. Jack died for the good of his country in 1725. Yet in 1738 the lane had not improved, for, on January the 18th of that year, Thomas Cave and Elizabeth Adams were hanged at Tyburn, for having robbed and murdered a certain unfortunate Mr. Quarrington, at the Angel and Crown Tavern in Shire-lane. In the days of the blundering old watchmen, a man was one night thrown down-stairs and killed in one of the dens in Shire-lane. The frightened murderers acted like the men in the Little Hunchback story in the Arabian Nights, for they took the stiff body and propped it up against a neighbour's door, where the lumbering watchmen, turning on their lanterns, soon after found it. Many years passed without a clue. At last, two dangerous fellows confined in the King's Bench were overheard, during a quarrel, accusing each other of having had a hand in the Shire-lane murder, and Justice stretched out her sword. The Temple Bar Stores, formerly the Sun Tavern, had been a notorious house for Tom and Jerry

frolics in the reckless times of the Regency. Strype, in 1720, speaks of the lower part of the lane as being filled with houses inferior to those of the Carey-street, or northern end. A tavern named the Antigallican in Shire-lane, was the great resort at the beginning of the century of sporting and fighting men. It was kept by Harry Lee, the father of Alexander Lee, the first and original "tiger," brought out and invented by the notorious Lord Barrymore, the eldest of the worthy kinsmen Cripplegate, Newgate, and Billingsgate.

During the Chartist times, says a local antiquary, a policeman was sent disguised as a shoemaker to join a violent democratic club in Shire-lane. At last, during a meeting, a hatter suddenly rose, angrily told the chairman there was a spy in the room, and proposed to throw him at once out of window. A more humane member, however, proposed as a milder measure to open the door, and if the spy did not immediately depart, to carry out the original proposition. The sergeant lost no time and made straight for the door, but his comrades, whom he had ordered to occupy the ground floor, not knowing him in his disguise, knocked him down with their truncheons as he tried to slip down-stairs. In Ship-yard, close to Shire-lane, once stood a block of houses, one of which was used by coiners, and was called in their slang "the smashing Lumber." Every room had a secret trap, and from the upper story, where the smashers worked, there was a shaft reaching to the cellars, into which, by means of a basket and pulley, the whole apparatus could in a moment be conveyed. The proprietor made his fortune, but soon after the establishment of the new police, the manufactory was rummaged out and destroyed.

The Trumpet stood midway on the left side of Shire-lane as you ascended from Temple Bar. It was a substantial red brick house, with four windows abreast in the two first stories. The sign of the Trumpet used to be below and between the windows of the first floor. Elias Ashmole, the great antiquary, from whom the Ashmolean Museum derives its name, lived in Shire-lane in 1670. Old Anthony Wood dined there with him on May the 1st of that year, and after dinner the two old virtuosi went over to Wood's lodgings in the Middle Temple, and spent nearly two cosey hours over Ashmole's coins, medals, pictures, and astrological manuscripts.

In a sordid sponging-house in Shire-lane, witty, worthless Theodore Hook, when he returned to England after those careless and unsatisfactory defalcations at the Mauritius, fraternised with poor, clever, sunken, hopeless Maginn. Here Hook joked and woke up the old echoes of the Kit-Cat Club merrily over his claret as he and his worthy companions roared out his own song:

> Hang him, and curse that perfidious pernicious
> Rascal who cleared out the till at Mauritius.

So much has local history recorded of the sunshine and the darkness, the glory and the shame of the degraded alley that has just been swallowed up by ever-hungry Time.

THE ROSE AND THE KEY.

CHAPTER LX. ARRIVED.

"WELL, what is it, Mr. Darkdale?" inquired Maud, eagerly, as soon as he had reached the side of the carriage.

"Two bailiffs, miss, in charge of an officer, arrested for debt, and something worse; they have had a bit of a row in the coach; he's a troublesome fellow. I knew something about him; he has been up before, and I think there's a criminal warrant this time."

"Was he hurt?"

"A scratch, I fancy. It isn't easy always keeping those dangerous cases from hurting themselves; he's very strong, and always slipping away if he can. But they have him fast enough this time; and the road's clear of them now; so I suppose I had best tell our post-boys, miss, to get on?"

"Please do; it is growing late. How long will it take to reach Carsbrook?"

"About an hour, miss."

Maud leaned back in the carriage, the unpleasant excitement of their recent adventure still tingling in her nerves.

Could it be that Captain Vivian had got into a scrape, and was really in the hands of bailiffs? A sad hearing for poor Ethel Tintern; rather a shock even to Maud.

"Do you know anything of that officer those people were taking away in the carriage?" inquired the young lady, suddenly, of her attendant, so soon as they were again in motion.

"I may, miss, or I mayn't. I could not say for certain, unless I was to see him," answered the servant.

"Have you ever seen an officer named Vivian, who is tall, and has light hair; a young man, rather good-looking?" persisted Maud.

"Well, I—I think I did," she replied,

watching Maud's face. "I *have* seen some one like that. Veevian? Yes. He used to call hisself Veevian."

"The person who passed us by, who said they were murdering him—how horrible his voice was!—said his name was Vivian. You heard him, of course?"

"Well, I made shift to hear; but there was a noise, you know," answered Mercy Creswell, evasively.

"Oh, you must have heard him call out that his name was Vivian; you are not at all deaf," said the young lady, irritated.

"I did hear something like it, for certain," she replied.

Miss Mercy would have been very glad to know, while under these examinations, what the extent of Miss Vernon's information actually was, for however willing she might be to tell stories, she was especially averse to being found out at this particular juncture. The sense of this inconvenience a good deal embarrassed her accustomed liberty of speech.

All this time Maud was possessed by the suspicion that, for some reason or other, Mercy Creswell was deliberately deceiving her, and that she knew just as much as Darkdale did about this Mr. Vivian. More than ever she disliked being assigned this particular attendant, and more and more puzzled she became in her search for her mother's motive.

For awhile she looked from the window. The wood had gradually thinned, and now but a few scattered and decayed firs stretched their bleached boughs under the moonbeams, and stooped over the peat.

"Why should you try to deceive me?" said Miss Vernon, suddenly turning to Mercy Creswell, who, with her mouth screwed together, and her cunning eyes looking from her window upon the moonlit prospect, was busy with her own thoughts.

"Me deceive you? La, Miss Maud! Why should I deceive you, above all? I would not, for no consideration, miss. I hope I have a conscience, miss. I'd be sorry, I assure you, Miss Maud."

"Why, then, did you not tell me, at once, that you knew something about that gentleman, Mr. Vivian? You know as much about him as Mr. Darkdale does."

"Well now, indeed, I do not, miss, no sich thing. I may 'a seen him, and I think I did at Lady Mardykes; he's a cousin, or something, to her."

"Oh, really? A relation of Lady Mardykes."

"Yes, miss. If it be the same I mean."

Maud mused for a minute or two.

"How far are we now from Carsbrook?" she asked.

"Well, miss, I'd say little more than three mile. Here's the finger-post, and down there, among the trees, is the Red Lion, and there we'll get into the right road, without another turn, right on to the house."

"I'm not sorry," said Maud, looking from the windows with more interest than before. "It has been a long journey. You were at Carsbrook this morning?"

"Yes, miss," said the maid, who had gradually grown to look careworn and pallid, as they neared their destination.

"Was Lady Mardykes there?"

"No, miss," answered Mercy.

"She was expected there, wasn't she?"

"Expected there?" repeated Miss Creswell. Let me think. Oh, la! yes, to be sure, she was expected."

"How soon?"

"How soon?" 'Twill be to-morrow morning. Oh, yes, to-morrow morning. To-morrow's Tuesday? Yes, to-morrow morning, for certain."

They were now driving through a pretty wooded country. On the left was a great park wall, grey and moss-streaked, mantled here and there with ivy, and overlapped by grand old trees. On the right were hedge-rows, and many a sloping field; and, a little in advance, the chimneys and gables of a village, and the slender spire of a rural church, white in the moonlight.

"We're near home now, miss," said Mercy.

"Oh," said Maud, looking out more curiously. "What wall is that?"

"The park wall, miss."

"It would not be easy to climb that; higher, I think, than Roydon wall."

"It is very high, miss."

"And how soon is Miss Max expected to arrive?"

"Miss Medwyn?" exclaimed the maid, laughing, all at once, in spite of herself.

"Why do you laugh? Miss Medwyn is coming here, and I thought she would have been here to-day," said Maud, a little haughtily.

"Like enough, miss," said Mercy, drying her eyes. "La, ha, ha, ha! it is funny—I beg your pardon, miss. I suppose she will —time enough. But she was not here when I left this morning."

"We'll hear all about it when we reach the house. I suppose there is nothing like a dance, or anything of that kind, while Lady Mardykes is away?"

"Oh, la! yes, miss. No end of dancing and music and everything that way," an-

swered Mercy, with a great sigh, and a haggard look, after her brief merriment. "There's a—what do you call it?—of singing and music to-night.

"A concert?"

"Yes, that's it, miss, a concert. A concert of music. La! they does it so beautiful, you wouldn't believe. I wish Miss Medwyn was here to try her pipe at it. Hoo, hoo, hoo—la! I beg your pardon—she's so staid and wise, miss!"

Mercy was stuffing her handkerchief into her mouth to stifle her laughter. But this time it was over quickly.

At this moment the postilions wheeled their horses to the left, and pulled them up, calling lustily, "Gate, gate!"

"So we have arrived," said Maud, letting down the window, and looking out with the curiosity of long-deferred expectation.

The leaders' heads seemed almost touching the bars of a great iron gate, over which burned a solitary lamp, acting, lighthouse fashion, rather as a warning than as an effectual light.

They were under the shadow of gigantic elms, that threw their branches from side to side; the carriage-lamps dimly lighted a few clusters of their dark foliage, and the light over the gate showed, for a few feet round and above it, the same moveless leafage.

"We shan't be long reaching the house?" she inquired of Mr. Darkdale, who was walking by the window toward the gate, for she remembered "approaches" three miles long after you enter the gate, deceiving you with a second journey before you reach the hall-door.

"Not five minutes, miss," said the man, hardly turning his head as he passed.

Was he growing a little gruffer, she thought, as they approached their destination?

Darkdale was talking earnestly in a low tone with the man who had come to the gate at their summons; and then he called:

"Be alive, now—open the gate."

In a minute more they were driving up the approach at a rapid pace under rows of trees. Suddenly the shadowy road they followed turned to the right, and took a direction parallel to the high road; about a hundred yards on, they drove up to the front of the house, along which this road, expanding before it into a court-yard, passes. And now they pull up before the steps of the hall-door. And the horses stand drooping their heads, and snorting, and sending up each a thin white vapour, through which the metal buckles of their harness glimmer faintly in the moonlight.

Mr. Darkdale was already on the steps ringing the bell.

CHAPTER LXI. IN THE HOUSE.

Maud was looking at the house—a huge structure of the cagework sort, which stood out in the light broad and high, its black V's and X's and I's traced in black oak beams, contrasting like gigantic symbols with the smooth white plaster they spanned and intersected, and which showed dazzlingly in the moon's intense splendour, under which also many broad windows were sparkling and glimmering.

A footman in livery stood before the open door, in the shadow of a deep porch, and Maud observed that Mr. Darkdale seemed to speak to him as one in authority, and by no means as one servant to another.

Maud was looking from the carriage window; and the hall was full of light, which came out with a pleasant glow, showing the gilt buttons and gold lace on the servant's livery, flushing the white powder on his head, and making Mr. Darkdale look blacker against its warm light. Some figures, gentlemen in evening dress, and ladies in brilliant costume, passed and repassed a little in perspective.

There came from the interior, as the hall-door stood partly open, the sounds of violins and other instruments, and the more powerful swell of human voices.

Mr. Darkdale turned and ran down the steps, and at the carriage window said:

"There's a concert going on, and a great many of the people moving about in the hall. Perhaps you had better come in by a different way?"

"That is just what I wished," said Miss Vernon.

But Darkdale did not seem to care very much for her sanction, and in fact had not waited for it. He was now talking to the drivers, and the hall-door had been shut. He returned, and said, at the window:

"Your boxes shall be taken up to your room, Miss Vernon, and as the night is so fine, you will have no objection, I dare say, to walk round to the entrance to which I will conduct you and Mercy Creswell."

He opened the carriage-door, and the young lady got out and found herself in the court-yard. Looking along the face of the great house to the right, a mass of stables and other offices closed the view, behind a broken screen of fine old elms; and to the left it was blocked by dark and thicker masses of towering trees.

In this latter direction, along the front

of the house, Mr. Darkdale led the way. In the still air his swift steps sounded sharp on the hard ground. He did not seem to care whether she liked his pace or not.

As she hurried after him, from the open windows, whose blinds, transparent with the lights within, were down, she heard, it seemed to her, very fine voices singing, as she thought, that brilliant staccato air, Quest un' Nodo, &c., from Cenerentola, and so unusually well that she was almost tempted to pause and listen.

But Mr. Darkdale did not consult her, but glided on to the extremity of the house, where a high wall confronted them, and with a latch-key opened a door, beside which he stood, holding it wide, for Miss Vernon and her attendant, and shutting it immediately on their passing in.

They were now in the great quadrangle which lies against the side of the house, with the quaint Dutch flower-beds, like fanciful carpet pattern, surrounding it, and the tall yew hedges giving it a cloister-like seclusion. Miss Vernon easily recognised this by the description; the trim yew hedges were visible, overtopped by a dense screen of trees at the other side, every distance marked by the thin mist of night; and in the centre stretched the smooth carpet of grass, in the midst of which stood the old mulberry-tree.

"Oh! This is the croquet-ground?" said Miss Vernon to her attendant, as they passed on.

"Ay, that will be the croquet-ground," answered her maid, a little absently, as if a gloom and suspicion had come over her. Her fat face had grown more than usually putty-coloured, and she was screwing her lips together, and frowning hard.

Mr. Darkdale spoke never a word until he had reached the door through which Antomarchi, some nights before, had admitted himself and Doctor Malkin to the self-same house.

A servant, not in livery, stood by this door, which was ajar, and opened it wide at their approach.

Darkdale whispered a few words to him, the purport of which Maud did not catch, and was not meant to hear, and in this same tone the man replied a word or two.

It was rather a chill reception. But then her hostess was absent, and certainly was not accountable for the uncomfortable ways of the odd attendants whom it had pleased her mother to assign her.

The servant hied away into the door; it seemed to execute some behest of Darkdale's in haste; and Darkdale himself stood at it instead, to receive them.

"So, in Carsbrook at last," said Maud, with a smile, as she placed her foot on the oak flooring of the very long passage with which we are already acquainted.

Mercy Creswell screwed her lips harder, and raised her eyebrows, "pulling," as they say, in her abstraction, an old and dismal grimace.

"Now, miss? Oh, ay to be sure," said Mercy Creswell, as it were, half awaking, and looking vaguely about her.

Mr. Darkdale shut the heavy door, which closed by a spring bolt, with a clang that boomed through the long passage, and then, with an odd familiarity with internal arrangements, he drew the bolts with noisy rapidity, and turned the key which was in the lock, and drew it out.

"Now, miss, you'll not be long getting to your room," said Mercy Creswell, her eyes wandering along the wall, and something sunken and weary in her unwholesome face.

"Well, I should hope not," thought Maud, a little surprised.

Darkdale was walking along the passage with rapid strides, having merely beckoned to them to follow.

Miss Maud was a good deal disgusted at this procedure. She was obliged, in order to keep this man in view, to follow at a rapid pace, and as he turned a corner, which she had not yet reached, Maud saw a person emerge from a side-door in the perspective of the passage, the sight of whom very much surprised her.

It was Doctor Malkin who stepped forth under the lamp which overhung that door, his bald head flushed, and his disagreeable countenance smiling grimly.

With the smile still on his thin lips he turned his head and saw Miss Vernon.

He thought, I dare say, that she had not seen him, for he instantly drew back into the recess of the doorway.

Perhaps he had not recognised her, perhaps he did not choose to be recognised in this part of the house. But a few days ago he certainly was not even acquainted with Lady Mardykes. But he had a good many friends, and she an infinitude, and an introduction might, of course, have been very easily managed.

This all passed in her mind nearly momentarily, as she walked quickly into the side passage after Darkdale, Mercy Creswell keeping hardly a foot behind, and a little to the other side.

The impression this odd little incident left upon her mind was, notwithstanding, unpleasant.

Having turned to the left she saw the large screen I mentioned on a former occasion, that protected the door at which Darkdale was now tapping. It was hardly opened when Maud reached it.

"Can my room be on this floor?" she wondered.

No, it was no such thing. Mr. Drummond, short, serious, and benevolent, with rosy cheeks and brown eyes, and bald head, and a pen behind his ear, was standing in a short office coat at the threshold.

"This is Miss Maud Vernon, daughter of Lady Vernon, of Roydon Hall," said Darkdale, performing this odd office of introduction in a dry, rapid way.

"Half an hour later than we expected," said Mr. Drummond, pulling out a large old-fashioned silver watch by the chain, from which dangled a bunch of seals and keys on his comfortable paunch; and then glancing back, it was to be presumed at a clock, in the interior, "no, twenty-five, precisely five-and-twenty minutes late," and he turned from the corners of his eyes upon Miss Vernon a shrewd glance, and quickly made her a respectful bow.

"I'll tell you about that by-and-bye," said Darkdale.

"I hope the young lady will find everything to her liking, I'm sure."

"Miss Vernon's come for a short visit to *Lady Mardykes* here, a few weeks or so," interrupted Darkdale. "And there are two boxes, largest size, and two middle size, and a dressing-case, and a bonnet-box, and here's Lady Vernon's list of the jewels she's brought; and—come here Miss Creswell—she's to wait on Miss Vernon. Which is Miss Vernon's room?"

He dived into the room, and returned in a moment with a big book like a ledger.

"Miss Vernon? Yes. Here it is. This will be it—A A, Fourteen."

"A A, Fourteen," repeated Darkdale, musing. "That is at the west side of the cross-door, eh?"

"Yes, so it is."

"I—I didn't think that," said Darkdale, drawing nearer to him, with an inquiring glance and a dubious frown of thought.

"Yes, it's all right; and here's the voucher and 'question' wrote with his own hand across it."

Darkdale read the paper, and returned it to the plump fingers of the secretary.

"It is—that's it," he said.

"I'm a little tired. I should like to get to my room, please. I suppose my maid knows where it is?" said Miss Vernon, who was beginning to lose patience.

"In one moment, presently, please, Miss Vernon." Darkdale whispered a word in the ear of Mercy Creswell. "Now, Miss Vernon, please, we have only a moment to delay on the way, and then your maid shall show you to your room."

At the same quick pace he led her through a passage or two, and opened a door, which she entered after him.

"You shan't be detained a moment here, Miss Vernon," he repeated.

It is a spacious oval room, panelled massively up to the ceiling, and surrounded, as it seems, with doors all alike in very heavy casings. It is rather bare of furniture. A thick Turkey carpet covers the floor. There are four enormous arm-chairs on castors, and a square table, covered with stamped leather, and with legs as thick as cannons on castors, stands in the centre of the room. A ponderous oak desk lies upon the table, and is, in fact, attached to it, the whole heavy structure forming one massive piece. Except these articles of furniture, there is not a movable thing in the room.

The chamber is lighted from the ceiling, over the table, by a small oval line of gas-jets, which looks like a continuous ribbon of flame.

There is something queer, and almost dismaying, in the effect of this bare and massive room, with its four huge, modern, purple leather chairs.

The immense solidity of the mouldings and panelling that surround it, as well as its peculiar shape, would reflect back and muffle any sound uttered within it. And, somehow, it suggests vaguely the idea of surgery, the strap, the knife, and all that therapeutic torture.

The effect of the mild equable light is odd, and the monotony with which the doors, or the sham doors, match one another all round, has something bewildering and portentous in it.

While she looks round at all this, Mr. Darkdale has left the room; and turning about she finds that Mercy Creswell, perhaps, never entered it. At all events, she certainly is not there now, and Maud is quite alone.

One thing is obvious. It certainly is pretty evident that Lady Mardykes is not at home. So at least Maud thinks.

"There must, however, be some servant,

I think, who can show me my room. I'll try," she resolves.

Maud accordingly tries the handle of the particular door through which she thinks she had entered, but it will not turn; then another, with the same result. It is rather a disconcerting situation, for by this time she cannot tell by what door she had come in, or by which of all these Mr. Darkdale had gone out, each door is so like its neighbour.

She looks about for a bell, but she could discover nothing of the kind.

Before another minute had passed, however, one of the doors at the other side of the room opened noiselessly, and a marble-featured man, with strange eyes, and black, square beard, stood before the panel, like a picture. It was Antomarchi.

"Oh, I'm afraid the servant has made a mistake," said Miss Vernon, who was vexed at her absurd situation. "He showed me in here as a room where I was to wait for my maid, till she returned to show me the way to my room."

"She will be here in a moment, Miss Vernon; there has been no mistake. I hope your head is better?"

"Thanks, a great deal better."

She was surprised at his knowing that she had complained of a slight headache on her journey.

"I'm glad of that. My friend, Lady Mardykes, will be here in the morning. I am a doctor, and I am held accountable for the health and spirits of all the inmates of this big house."

The pallor and stillness of his face, the blackness of his hair and beard, and the strange metallic vibration of his bass tones, produced in Maud a sensation akin to fear, and made even his pleasantries formidable.

"Your maid must, by this time, be at the door."

He opened a door, beckoned, and Mercy Creswell came into the room.

"If you permit me, Miss Vernon, I'll try your pulse." And he took the young lady's wrist before she could decline. "You don't often drive so far. You'll be quite well in the morning; but you must not think of coming down to breakfast."

"Is Miss Medwyn here?" inquired Maud, before committing herself to stay in her room all the morning.

"No, Miss Medwyn is not here"

"I wonder what can have happened. Lady Mardykes wrote to me to say she would certainly be here, to stay some time, this morning."

"An uncertain world!" he observed, with a hard smile. "But Lady Mardykes is seldom mistaken. Whatever she *said* one may be sure she *believed*; and what she thinks is generally very near the truth. You had an alarm on the way? But you did not mind it much?"

"It did startle me a good deal for the moment; but it was soon over. I think the whole party were startled."

"I dare say; but you don't feel it now? It won't interfere with your sleep, eh?"

"Oh, no," laughed the young lady; "I assure you I'm quite well—I'm not the least likely to be on your list of invalids, and so I think I'll say good-night."

"Good-night," said he, with his peculiar smile, and a very ceremonious bow, and he opened the door and stood beside it, with the handle in his fingers.

Mercy Creswell took the bedroom candle that stood, lighted, on a table outside the door. The young lady walked on. Antomarchi's smile was instantly gone, and the stern, waxen face was grave as before.

Antomarchi's eyes rested for a moment on Mercy Creswell as she passed. He nodded, and made her a slight sign.

You would have judged by her face that she stood in great awe of this man. She positively winced; and with a frightened ogle, and very round eyes, and mouth down at the corners, made him a little curtsy.

He shut the door without waiting for that parting reverence, and she saw no more of him or the oval room for that night.

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